

To: Secretary Cynthia LaWare

From: Sharon Moffatt, Commissioner of Health

Re: Level III Building related Issues Ref #47

Date: June 4, 2008

This memo is to finalize the Vermont Department of Health recommendations related to health concerns reported to the Bennington Building's manager. The area of concern relates to boxed files in a file room for the Department of Corrections Bennington District Office. Three possible individuals were reported to have sinus infections, pneumonia, and bronchitis with a common experience of working with the files. It is important to note that the health concerns presented to VDH occurred over 6 months ago and to our knowledge no recent health concerns related to the Department of Corrections files exist. It is also important to note that I have been in communication with Commissioner Hofmann and Field Director Jackie Kotkin, over the past three weeks to assure no further purging of files occurred until VDH finalized its recommendations

As part of the investigation Dr. Austin Sumner interviewed two of the individuals who had previous health complaints. The third person did not present for interview. In addition, I made a request of Commissioner Myers to have the BGS Industrial Hygienist do a site visit for further assessment of the environmental situation (see attached site visit report).

On careful review with Dr. Sumner, State Epidemiologist-Environmental Health and Dr. Don Swartz, Medical Director there is no indication that the files in the Department of Corrections Bennington file room are a greater risk for causing health issues to employees than any other files. The work related to these files involved purging the files of old and confidential documents, which generated paper dust. It is also recognized that a number of the Bennington employees have possible increased respiratory sensitivity which could be easily aggravated from exposure to increased levels of paper dust. As with any files where extensive purging that may result in increased paper dust occurs we recommend following the VOSHA voluntary standards as noted in recommendations # 4 below. With this said and in consideration of the employees of the Bennington office we have decided to remove the files from Bennington and have the work done from the central Agency of Human Services offices.

Bases on our careful review we recommend the following:

Recommendations

1. Remove files so storage room can be cleaned.
2. HEPA-vacuum the room and wet-wipe all surfaces.

3. Files should be purged in a well-ventilated room or outside.
4. Employees who work with the files should be allowed voluntary use of disposable dust masks consistent with VOSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.134(c)(2). This is for employee comfort when working in what could be a dusty work environment.
5. Employees who work with the files should be allowed voluntary use of nitrile gloves to prevent paper cuts and hand contact with eyes, nose and mouth.
6. Employees who have documented allergies or asthma should be temporarily accommodated and job duties related to purging files older than five years taken from the Bennington State Office building should be limited.
7. If duties associated with file purging are onerous or labor-intensive, the employer may choose to hire a contractor to purge and archive files.

Enclosures:

- Memo of recommendations from Dr. Austin Sumner, State Epidemiologist-Environmental Health
- Site Visit Report on May 14th from Mike Blanchet, Industrial Hygienist , Buildings and General Services